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THE TRICOLOUR



DORA SIGERSON

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY ROBINSON, DUBLIN

THE TRICOLOUR

POEMS OF THE
IRISH REVOLUTION

BY

DORA SIGERSON SHORTER

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MAUNSEL AND ROBERTS, LIMITED
DUBLIN

1922

PR 5450
S 7 T 75

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EDITOR'S NOTE

THE publication of this book is a sacred obligation to one who broke her heart over Ireland. Dora Sigerson in her last few weeks of life, knowing full well that she was dying, designed every detail of this little volume—the dedication to the tricolour, and the order in which the poems were to be printed.

Any profit that may arise from the sale of the book will be devoted, as are all the copyrights of the author, to a monument which she herself sculptured with a view to its erection over the graves of the "Sixteen Dead Men" when circumstances place their ashes in Glasnevin.

The editor is indebted to the courtesy of Constable and Co., of London, for permission to reprint eight poems from "The Sad Years," by Dora Sigerson.

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THE TRICOLOUR

I

ABOUT this time there was let loose a great tumult in the city. Fire and battle held Dublin for about a week, and then from out of it all, above the crash of falling houses and the roar of guns, over the crackling flames rose the tricolour, and for a few mad days it shone into the hearts of the people.

And then a wounded prisoner of war, by the name of James Connolly, was slain, and so was disbanded the wonderful Citizen Army which had arisen from the awful conditions of bad housing and miserable wages so prevalent in Ireland.

So Labour was shot down because it dared to be discontented with its fortunes.

At the same time Pearse, the idealist, surrendered to superior forces to save his countrymen.

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And Idealism was shot down because it dared to dream greater dreams than were allowed to small nationalities.

On Easter Monday Sheehy-Skeffington, the pacifist, was murdered secretly and without trial.

Thus Peace was shot down by a lunatic, because it got in the way of militarism.

So the bright flag fell from the high place where it had floated free. Yet what a tri-colour were these three—Labour, Idealism, and Pacifism—how proudly it flew, so distinct in its colours, so perfect in its union, preaching its lesson for Easter to the people ! At Easter, the time of Resurrection, not of Death. Yet out of Death comes Resurrection. Who will take it upon himself to crucify Labour, since Christ was the Son of a carpenter ; Idealism, for Christ was an idealist ; Peace, for did not Christ our Lord say “ Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God ” ?

II

OUT of poverty and misery from some dark corner of the slums she had hurried at the

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sound of the shooting—the old woman who had no place in the revolution—where the young, the hopeful, the idealists were fighting. What could she do then, this weak and trembling old creature, this Sean-Bhean Bhocht, useless, and in the way in the gun-swept streets of the blazing city?

What did she deem her mission in the fighting world of soldiers? What could she teach?

She was seen kneeling in the danger zone saying her rosary. What was she praying for at such a moment? Was it for herself or for someone dear to her? Listen, and I will tell you why she hurried her black beads through her fingers for fear God would not give her time to finish. Great was her prayer. She prayed for the success of the revolution.

Think of it, meditate on this sacred prayer, for here is the spirit of Ireland. This is the spirit of patriotism—the love that survives all things.

Without hope of gain, without hope of honour, without love of life, without fear of death, who mourned for nobody, for whom nobody would mourn, she knelt in the streets in the danger zone and prayed for the success of the revolution.

THE TRICOLOUR

With the fire in her old veins revived, with the patriotic heart, she, too, held her place in the ranks, hearing the wonderful call that had come to her countrymen. When all seemed quenched of youth and young heroic dreams, poor and nameless, she threw off the rags that poverty held about her and was beautiful in the tricolour of faith, hope, and love.

Oh, Sean-Bhean Bhocht, the spirit of your land was not more fair than you—you who knelt in the gun-swept streets of your city to pray for the success of the revolution.

She lay some hours later in the morgue, her chill hands still clasping her rosary beads folded over her brave, unconquered heart. God rest you, sister. Sleep well, nor dream that you have failed; for such love as yours holds ever aloft the flag of liberty, and of such fine clay as yours is our island made.

THE SACRED FIRE

THEY lit a fire within their land that long was
ashes cold,
With splendid dreams they made it glow,
threw in their hearts of gold.
They saw thy slowly paling cheek and knew
thy failing breath,
They bade thee live once more, Kathleen, who
was so nigh to death.
And who dare quench the sacred fire, and who
dare give them blame,
Since he who draws too near the glow shall
break into a flame?
They lit a beacon in their land, built of the
souls of men,
To make thee warm once more, Kathleen, to
bid thee live again.

SIXTEEN DEAD MEN

HARK ! in the still night. Who goes there ?

“ *Fifteen dead men.*” Why do they wait ?

“ *Hasten, comrade, death is so fair.*”

Now comes their Captain through the dim
gate.

Sixteen dead men ! What on their sword ?

“ *A nation's honour proud do they bear.*”

What on their bent heads ? “ *God's holy word ;*

All of their nation's heart blended in prayer.”

Sixteen dead men ! What makes their shroud ?

“ *All of their nation's love wraps them around.*”

Where do their bodies lie, brave and so proud ?

“ *Under the gallows-tree in prison ground.*”

Sixteen dead men ! Where do they go ?

“ *To join their regiment, where Sarsfield leads ;*

Wolfe Tone and Emmet, too, well do they know.

There shall they bivouac, telling great deeds.”

SIXTEEN DEAD MEN

Sixteen dead men ! Shall they return ?

*“ Yea, they shall come again, breath of our
breath.*

They on our nation's hearth made old fires burn.

*Guard her unconquered soul, strong in their
death.”*

CONSCRIPTION

THERE is a shadow on the head I love,
THERE is a danger lurks thy path upon,
It murmurs low as coos the mating dove,
It calls in grey and gathered clouds above,
For thee, for thee, Kathleen ni-Houlihan.

It hides in seas that beat about thy shores,
The wind in passing whispers and is gone,
And the brown leaf no summer will restore,
Flutters this cry on Winter's russet floor,
Danger to thee, Kathleen ni-Houlihan.

God of the seas disperse the gathered gloom,
God of the skies smile her sweet path upon,
God of the earth this danger swift entomb,
Slay the wild beast that creeps to bring her
doom.

Save her, save her, Kathleen ni-Houlihan !

SICK I AM AND SORROWFUL

SICK I am and sorrowful, how can I be well
again

Here, where fog and darkness are, and big
guns boom all day,

Practising for evil sport? If you speak
humanity,

Hatred comes into each face, and so you cease
to pray.

How I dread the sound of guns, hate the bark
of musketry,

Since the friends I loved are dead, all stricken
by the sword.

Full of anger is my heart, full of rage and
misery ;

How can I grow well again, or be my peace
restored ?

If I were in Glenmalure, or in Enniskerry now,
Hearing of the coming spring in the pine-
tree's song ;

SICK I AM AND SORROWFUL

If I woke on Arran Strand, dreamt me on the
cliffs of Moher,

Could I not grow gay again, should I not be
strong ?

If I stood with eager heart on the heights of
Carrantuohill,

Beaten by the four great winds into hope and
joy again,

Far above the cannons' roar or the scream of
musketry,

If I heard the four great seas, what were
weariness or pain ?

Were I in a little town, Ballybunion, Bally-
brack,

Laughing with the children there, I would
sing and dance once more,

Heard again the storm clouds roll hanging
over Lugnaquilla,

Built dream castles from the sands of Killiney's
golden shore.

If I saw the wild geese fly over the dark lakes
of Kerry

Or could hear the secret winds, I could kneel
and pray.

SICK I AM AND SORROWFUL

But 'tis sick I am and grieving, how can I be
well again

Here, where fear and sorrow are—my heart so
far away ?

IN THE YEARS OF SARSFIELD

I wish I were over the Curlew Mountains,
Marching to Sligo by valley and fen ;
I wish I were back in the years of Sarsfield,
Tramping the rough roads with him and his
men.

I wish that I stood upon Yellow Island,
Watching the camp that the Williamites
made ;
I wish that my good gun was pressed to my
shoulder
And that my caubeen held the white cockade.

I wish I were out with "galloping Hogan,"
Happy a guide for my hero to be,
Encamped for the night on the Keeper
Mountain,
Ready to guard with the brave rapparee.

IN THE YEARS OF SARSFIELD

I wish I had been in the woods of Cullen
In the dark night when the battle began ;
I wish I had heard at the wan moon's rising
" Sarsfield the word, and Sarsfield the man."

I wish I were young at the siege of Limerick,
Holding the breach there and glad in the
fight ;
Ah, could I but see him, King William of
Orange,
With his troops defeated ready for flight.

Had I but stood on the bridge of Athlone,
there
Flinging the plank and beam into the wave,
Keeping the broken arch, as the last hero stood
Fighting the fight of death, one of the brave.

I wish I had fought in the flood of the Shannon
With the grim Dutchmen, to conquer or
drown,
Left without shot or shell by the false Maxwell,¹
Into the deep had that traitor gone down.

¹ One Brigadier Maxwell, in the Campaign of 1691.

IN THE YEARS OF SARSFIELD

I wish I had fought in the battle of Aughrim
By the black bog on the side of the hill,
Seeing there Ginkel's men fall to disquietude,
Failing with Sarsfield meant living still.

I wish I had flown with the Wild Geese across
the sea,
Knelt on red Landen's plain, facing the foe ;
Holding the dear head of Sarsfield on my
heart,
Knowing from his brave blood heroes would
grow.

*Ah, had I sailed to far France out of Galway,
There on the deck with spy Maxwell to be,
Bishop or Luttrell never had stayed me
From "tossing the Scotsman right into the
sea." ¹*

¹ Macaulay's *History of England*, Ch. XVII

A CATHOLIC TO HIS ULSTER BROTHER

Is there no bond of blood to you, my brother ?
We two have called her ours, the ancient
 Mother,
And here we hope to rest from Life's
 temptation
Building of souls our patriotic Nation.

Can we not stand amongst the purple heather
To find that God we both revere together ?
Beneath this sky can come no bigot preaching
To fling our lofty dreams to lowly teaching.

William or James, need we still hate each other
For their dead sakes, my Irish-hearted brother ?
Can we not pray without fear of dissension
"God save our land" with but the same
 intention ?

A CATHOLIC TO HIS ULSTER BROTHER

If we from Derry walls were flung defeated,
And you from Limerick town in speed
retreated,

One God is ours no matter what religion,
One land we love and shall not have division.

Shall we divide? Ah, better take the token
Of Ireland's luck and leave the shamrock broken
Of one green leaf, when four brought joy
upon it,

As Ulster lost—from Munster, Leinster,
Connacht.

But Ulster lost with each green sod still crying
For those dear dead who left us dreams
undying

Of Ireland's needs, O'Neill whose heart took
fire

And joined the sacred flames of Hugh Maguire.

Shall we not cry "Lamh Dearg abu" and
glory

In Cromwell's fall, in reading Clonmel's story,
Or by the "Yellow Ford" who cheered most
loudly

As hand from hand we passed the same flag
proudly?

A CATHOLIC TO HIS ULSTER BROTHER

Yea, we have gone with joyous hearts to follow
Men of your thought by mountain, hill and
 hollow,
Died for them, lived again, loved down the
 ages
To bless them yet upon historic pages.

Emmet and Tone ! Ah, half our pride up-
 rooted,
We were but dead if we such names refuted,
Our well-beloved, dear brothers of our
 Sireland,
We call with them "For God and Holy
 Ireland."

And do we mourn our Owen Roe less sadly,
Or hold Lord Edward's claim more loved or
 gladly,
Because of "popish" ways of Owen's praying,
Or Edward went to other altars straying ?

Do we forget or could our fond faith slacken
A patriot's glow in owning Joy MacCracken,
Who Belfast-born has helped the island's story
And shed from Antrim's hills a sunrise glory.

A CATHOLIC TO HIS ULSTER BROTHER

Mitchel or Meagher ! Ah, hear the dear
names falling

On no deaf ears, we welcome to you calling,
“ O dead long gone, O dead of recent slaying,
From your chill hands we take the banner,
praying.”

Where this dear land forbids us to forsake her,
Join with the one sweet voice to the same
Maker,

“ Our hate is one, our love is one the other,
Lead on ! or follow, O my Irish brother.”

THEY DID NOT SEE 'THY FACE

[IN MEMORY OF THOMAS MACDONAGH]

SOME on the pleasant hillside have thought
they saw thee pass,
As flings a cloud before the sun a shadow on
the grass,
They praised thy fairness and held dear thy
meekness and thy grace ;
They only saw thy shade, Kathleen, they did
not see thy face.

SOME on the purple mountains stood to see
thee speeding by,
As glides a sudden golden shaft across a
stormy sky ;
And these were braggarts of their love within
thy dwelling-place ;
They saw thy beauty, Rosin Dubh, they did
not see thy face.

THEY DID NOT SEE THY FACE

But some in flames of battle strove their
slender weight to throw
Against the bayonet and the gun that hid thy
only foe ;
They left for thee their earthly loves, these
heroes of thy race,
And died, as all must die, Kathleen, who once
have seen thy face.

So must thy grief be ever new who holds a
love like this,
That thrusts away a dear one's heart, a little
child's soft kiss,
That leaves behind an honoured home, a
Mother's fond embrace,
Till others seek again, Kathleen, to see thy
hidden face.

THE WILD BEAST

One spring as I went walking
By budding leaf and thorn
To see the sun a-shining
Upon an Easter morn ;
My hound she gambolled by me,
Oft hunting in her play
Some small thing in the hedges
She found upon her way,
How splendid was her going,
How happy was her joy,
I felt I could not chide her
Nor dared her play destroy.

Yet oft I called " Come hither,
I fear lest thou displace
Some hidden beast or reptile
All savage for the chase."
I scarce had spoken to her
And turned again for town
When we were in the shadows
And fog and mist came down.

THE WILD BEAST

When from the gloom and darkness
Some lion voice did roar.
He sprung upon our pathway
To stand our road before.
I cried in vain contention,
“O, let us go our way.”
But to our further progress
The red cat stood at bay.
My hound would not obey me,
So brave and fine was she,
But sprang upon the wild beast
To fight for liberty.

Oh, how my heart was beating
So full of grief and fear
At thunder of the battle
That fell upon my ear.
Oh, great and splendid fighting
Like to the times of Fionn,
Alas ! uneven chances,
My dear one could not win ;
And sudden to a silence
I opened eyes of pain,
With face towards her foe still
My faithful hound was slain.

THE WILD BEAST

But she has left behind her
 A son of splendid race,
And he shall bound before me
 And take the other's place.
So I can go a-walking
 'Mid budding leaf and thorn
To see the Sun a-rising
 Upon an Easter morn.

THE WILD GEESE

" Wild Geese are very numerous in this district, especially around Lough Esknahinny."—" Cork Examiner," December 12, 1916.

I WALKED by Esknahinny at the waning of the
moon,

As star by star came peeping to some celestial
tune.

The little waves crept to me to call and fall
away,

O, lone I was and lonesome to meet the
breaking day.

I heard wind voices whisper and leaned to
hear them speak ;

I saw the moving shadows—and feared to turn
and seek.

The slender reeds were shaking between me
and the light,

And loneliness fell from me with the treasure
of the night.

THE WILD GEESE

I heard dark wings flap by me towards the
rising sun,

Dear birds so swift in passing I blessed them
every one.

The wild geese had come back again, they
passed me in the night.

Between me and the waning moon I watched
them in their flight.

I had walked the paths of Kerry and dared
not say the word ;

I had trod the roads of Leinster all broken by
the sword.

O Ulster, Munster, Connacht, He gave Who
can restore,

The Wild Geese, the Wild Geese, they have
come home once more.

THE QUEEN

I SAW her many years ago, my gladness and
my grief.

She stood amongst the barley fields to bind
the wayward sheaf.

She walked upon the mountain's side to draw
the brown turf home,

She planted many famine crops within the
peaty loam.

From rugged rocks and silver shore she
gathered grey sloakeen.

She made the green earth brown again, and
made the brown earth green.

She wearied in those striving years from
morning until night.

Her fields grew white, her stately home shone
in the morning light.

But O, those hours of yesterday, mo storeen
and mo crie,

I saw her turn her face away to hide her grief
from me.

THE QUEEN

I flew to her a while ago, my thousand joys—
so dear ;

For ruin fell upon her house and I was full
of fear.

I saw wild fury seize her home, I heard a red
wind scream,

I saw the groaning roof-tree fall, the flame on
wall and beam.

I fell upon the broken way, struck down by
chill despair :

“ My life’s long love, my only joy, my dear
beyond compare,

A thousand souls will bleed with mine, a
thousand hearts expire,

To see so fair a form as thine upon a martyr’s
fire.”

From out the glow, from out the flame, from
ruin fierce and wild,

I saw her come with dancing feet and glad
face like a child,

Her red-gold hair, her snow-white brow, her
gown of silken green :

Out through the ruins of her home, she walked
as would a queen.

Ni Houlihan, Ni Houlihan, she came a splendid
queen.

THE CHOICE

THIS Consul Casement—he who heard the cry
Of stricken people—and who in his fight
To lift the torture load from broken men,
And shield sad women from eternal night,
Went through lone, hot, and fevered foreign
lands.

For doomèd Casement, slaves that he raised up
Pray with strong voices, so a wide world hears.
Men saved from anguish, women saved from
shame,
He dried your children's tears !
He gave you life—for him lift pleading hands.

Sir Roger Casement, honoured for his years
Of stress and struggle, of fatigue and work,
What is the claim of his frail human needs
For arduous hours he did not shun nor shirk,
A King's reward, a royal friendliness !

THE CHOICE

For honoured Casement titles and renown,
A future great with promise, all life's page
Writ in gold letters, and a path so soft
One could not hear the coming of old age
To point an honoured tomb that nations bless.

Ah ! Irish Casement, in the roar of war
That stung his blood and whipped his man-
hood's fire,
What did he hear upon red shaken earth,
Where little nations struggle and expire ?
Some banshee cry upon the hot wind thrills !

And Roger Casement—he who freed the slave,
Made sad babes smile and tortured women
hope,
Flung all aside, King's honours and great years,
To take for finis here a hempen rope,
And banshee cries upon far Irish hills.

THE OLD SONG

WHEN I was a young lad of happy sixteen
There came to my window the Cushla-mo-
chree,
And the song that she sang was the song of
the wind,
And the song that she sang was the song of
the sea.

"And will you come with me, a vic and a
stor?
And will you come with me, alanna?" she
cried,
"O, my father will rage and my mother will
mourn,
If I take to the mountains to march by your
side."

"O, your father must rage and your mother
must sigh,
But I bid you follow and I am your queen."

THE OLD SONG

O, I stole from my window I held her so dear,
And I followed the wave of her garments of
green.

My father did rage and my mother did sigh,
“Your way will be hard and your heart it will
break,
Your feet will grow weary, your cheek will be
pale,
If you go to the mountains for Grannia Wael’s
sake.”

My years waned in prison, my rough bed was
hard,
When I was a freeman my blood it was cold :
I met her, my true-love ; I made her my wife :
O, home-weary was I because I grew old !

O, the years flew in passing in peace and in
rest,
And I watched my young son as he leaped
and he ran,

THE OLD SONG

O, proud was my heart as I dreamed me a
dream,
I would wed him to fortune when he grew a
man.

But when I was dreaming one eve in my chair
There came to the window the song of the
sea,
The song of the mountains, the song of the
wind,
And my son rose and answered, "Who calls
upon me?"

"My son, if you listen your mother will
mourn,
Your father will rage, and your cheek will
grow pale,
Your wife will be grieving, your child weep
alone,
If you follow the singing of poor Grannia
Wael."

As he would not hear me his mother did
mourn,
His child wearied for him, his wife's cheek
grew pale,

THE OLD SONG

He was shot without pity at dawn of the day,
And the last words he spoke were, " God
bless Grannia Wael."

My grandchild is troubled, he calls from his
sleep,

" Ah, Gran'father, Gran'father, what does she
say ? "

" O, little one, little one, rest you secure,
The wind on the window it calls in its play.

" O, little one, little one, hush you and sleep,
'Tis the song of the wind and the cry of the
sea."

" O, gran'father, gran'father, when may I go ?
'Tis the voice of poor Grannia Wael calling to
me."

" O, your path will be rough and your prison
bed hard,
Your heart will be broken, your cheek will
grow pale,

THE OLD SONG

You will die on the gallows when life is yet
young,
If you list to the singing of old Grannia Wael."

"My path may be rough and my prison bed
hard,
But my heart will be glad and my soul shall
not quail,
I shall die on the gallows with joy and with
pride,
And my last breath shall whisper, 'God bless
Grannia Wael.' "

THE YOUNG VOLUNTEER

WITH a knock upon the window comes the
young volunteer,

'Tis his step upon the threshold ; " what is it
brings you here ? "

" Oh, will you up and follow, swift as the
homing swallow,

By mountain hill and hollow ? " said the young
volunteer.

Said the brave volunteer, said the loved
volunteer,

" Oh, will you up and follow with the true
volunteer ? "

Oh, I will not rise and follow with the young
volunteer,

With my pockets full of money and my house
so full of cheer.

Why should I go a-tramping, with cold and
windy camping,

On all my pleasures stamping with the young
volunteer ?

THE YOUNG VOLUNTEER

With this wild volunteer, with this strange
volunteer,
Why should I go a-tramping with this young
volunteer ?

With a knock upon your window comes the
young volunteer,
'Tis his step upon the threshold, what is it
brings him here ?
" Oh, rise and march together, in shine or
stormy weather,
With hopes you cannot tether," said the young
volunteer.
Said the brave volunteer, said the loved
volunteer,
" Will you up and march together ? " said the
true volunteer.

Yea, I will rise and follow with the young
volunteer,
And open is my doorway, oh, welcome is he
here.
Yea, I will go a-drilling, how gladly and how
willing,
With all my pulses thrilling, for the young
volunteer,

THE YOUNG VOLUNTEER

With the brave volunteer, with the loved
volunteer,

Oh, gladly go a-drilling with the true volunteer.

Oh, fool, to rise and follow with the young
volunteer,

Content we were and happy till he came calling
here.

Thus all our prospects blighting, what is the
use of fighting ?

We go with foe uniting, not with this volunteer,

Oh, this false volunteer, oh, this mad volunteer,

All our placid progress blighting comes this
wild volunteer.

Oh, since you will not follow with this young
volunteer,

To fight for home and freedom, what are you
doing here ?

Why were you still delaying, thus your
motherland betraying,

While he rose her voice obeying did the young
volunteer,

Did the true volunteer, did the loved volunteer,

While you were still delaying died the brave
volunteer.

THE YOUNG VOLUNTEER

'Tis a ghost and but the shadow of a young
volunteer,
He is dead and stilly sleeping, what should be
haunting here ?
'Tis but the storm winds flutter old dreams
you dare not utter
And false the hopes they mutter, and pale the
volunteer,
'Tis a dream volunteer, yea, a dead volunteer,
Old leaves that fly and flutter round a dead
volunteer.

Oh, be he ghost or shadow of a lost volunteer,
Though sad this heart and grieving, still
welcome is he here,
The greater his recruiting, who fell from
cowardly shooting,
I stand to him saluting, oh, my brave volunteer.
Oh, the dear volunteer, oh, this true volunteer,
All the greater the recruiting of this dead
volunteer.

THE TREE UPROOTED

IN MEMORY OF ROGER CASEMENT

THE earth-bound giant now is free, is free ;
The last fight over, and the last moan still ;
No tale of snow-clad heights where great
dreams be,
His exile heart can thrill.

Ah ! how he cried with groaning branch and
bough,
For that far land beyond the sunshine morn,
For that last joy tilled earth will not allow,
That land where he was born.

Ah ! how his heart that fought for freedom
pined ;
His leaves, like restless fingers, tried to hold
The trailing garments of the passing wind,
His struggle manifold.

THE TREE UPROOTED

The four winds heard and strove with mighty
hands

To bear him back to that far northern height
Where he was born ; loosed from his earthly
bonds,

He poised, a moment's flight.

Then to the wind in passionate embrace
His branches moved—out sung his parting
breath.

He leaned to freedom from his prison place,
Whose freedom was but death.

Better so lie, from this dire bondage free,
O ! heart, who knew the silence of the snows,
Than stand alone, O solitary tree !
Where English greenwood grows.

Better to die than live in dull disgrace,
O ! soul that dreamed the glory of the dream ;
To be for sparrows but a resting place,
Who heard the eagles scream.



A MONUMENT TO PADRAIC PEARSE AND HIS COMRADES,
SHOT IN EASTER WEEK

DESIGNED AND SCULPTURED BY DORA SIGERSON



THE WREATH

[EASTER, 1917]

HERE on my path by some hard fate struck
down,
When life at last held out full hands to me.
When the great dreams of younger years awoke
And dear, dead voices whispered "Liberty."
Ah, cruel blow, from which I stricken rise
And blindly stagger fro that path again,
To wonder if 'tis worth the striving now,
Thus robbed upon life's highway and half
slain.

Here I awoke to fear again the dead,
Whose tender faces held me as I slept.
Ah, well I knew who leaned above me there,
Into whose arms so pitifully I crept.
And I awoke, for Spring did cry, "Arise,
For birds within the green woods carol clear."
Then Easter came with wreath of lilies pale,
Placed on my heart the grief of yester-year.

THE PRISONER

ALL day I lie beneath the great pine tree,
Whose perfumed branches wave and shadow
me.

I hear the groaning of its straining heart
As in the breeze its thin leaves meet and part
Like frantic fingers loosened and entwined ;
I hear it whisper to the sighing wind,
“ What of the mountain peaks, where I was
born ? ”

As sharp tears drop I feel its falling thorn.

I see in the far clouds the wild geese fly,
Homeward once more, free, in the storm-swept
sky.

Back to the land they loved, all, all, have gone,
How swift the flight by joy and hope led on.
“ What of the mountain land where I was
born ? ”

I cry, they pass, glad in the dawning morn,
Home to the moon-pale lake, the heath-clad
hill,

And give no thought for one imprisoned still

THE PRISONER

All day I lie beneath the sad pine tree,
Whose groaning branches wave and shadow me,
Chained to the earth, the dark clay of the
grave,

In helpless fashion feel its wild heart rave.
“Free, set free,” I hear its moaning breath,
Where liberty means naught, alas, but death
Ah, freedom is but death.

OURSELVES ALONE ¹

ONE morning, when dreaming in deep meditation,

I met a sweet colleen a-making her moan.

With sighing and sobbing she cried and lamented ;

“ Oh, where is my lost one, and where has he flown ?

“ My house it is small, and my field is but little,

Yet round flew my wheel as I sat in the sun,
He crossed the deep sea and went forth for my battle :

Oh, has he proved faithless—the fight is not won ? ”

And then I said : “ Kathleen, ah ! do you remember

When you were a queen, and your castles were strong,

¹ *Sinn Fein Amhain.*

OURSELVES ALONE

You cried for the love of a cold-hearted
stranger,
And in your fair island you planted the wrong ?

“ And oh,” I cried, “ Kathleen, I once heard
you weeping
And sighing and sobbing and making your
moan.

You sang of a lost one, a dear one, a false
one—

‘ Oh, gone is my blackbird, and where has he
flown ? ’

“ Ah ! many came forth to the sound of your
crying,
And fought down the years for the freedom
you pined.

How many lie still, in their cold exile sleeping,
Who sought in far lands your lost blackbird
to find ?

“ And many are caught in the net of the
stranger,
And all but forgotten the sound of your name,

OURSELVES ALONE

For other loves call them to help and to save
them :

They fell to dishonour—we hold them in
shame.

“ Oh, why drive me forth from your hearth
into exile

And into far dangers ? Your house is my own.
Faithful I serve, as I ever did serve you,
Standing together, ourselves—and alone.”

KATHLEEN'S LOVER

I WOULD I had a thousand tongues
To sing thy praise, to sing thy praise,
I'd teach the birds on ev'ry tree
To chorus the sweet melody,
For all my days, for all my days.
I wish I had a thousand tongues
To curse thy foe, to curse thy foe,
I'd pray each stormy wind and wave
His house to break, his ship to stave,
To lay him low, to lay him low.

I wish I had a thousand hearts
To love thee more, to love thee more,
Lest one should break before thy tears
Let others come to hush thy fears
And thee adore, and thee adore.
I wish I had a thousand hearts
To hate thy foe, to hate thy foe.
Lest one should dare in pity turn
Let others still with vengeance burn
To lay him low, to lay him low.

KATHLEEN'S LOVER

I wish I had a thousand hands
To work for thee, to work for thee,
To bring thee fairest fruit and flower,
To pluck for thee God's golden hour,
To set thee free, to set thee free.
I wish I had a thousand hands
To strike thy foe, to strike thy foe,
I'd track him without rest or sleep,
My arm were strong, my thrust were deep
To lay him low, to lay him low.

I wish I had a thousand lives
For thee to live, for thee to live.
In foreign lands in ev'ry state
My days, my years, to make thee great
I'd freely give, so freely give.
I wish I had a thousand lives
To thee to fly, to thee to fly ;
To praise, to strive, to fight, to fall,
And on thy name and God to call,
For thee to live, for thee to die.

THE FOE

My foe did strike me, Lord, I am not meek,
I cannot turn to him the other cheek,
Rather to Thee for vengeance do I cry,
Tooth for a tooth, dear Lord, eye for an eye.

Had he but felled me, giving blow for blow,
My rage had little flame, my hate were slow,
I could forgive stood he to me alone,
But through those dearer souls he reached my
own.

Oh, brave heads slain, grey locked and darkly
brown,
I saw you bleed beneath the martyr's crown,
Dear eyes that closed on unfulfilled desire,
I saw you robbed of your celestial fire.

Pale lips that cried one prayer in parting
breath,
I knew you dumb in silence and in death.
My foe hath struck me, Lord, I am not meek,
I cannot turn to him the other cheek.

EMPIRE BUILDING

SOMEHOW I never liked you, John, your ways
were crude :

Your smile was pharisaical, your manners rude ;
Although you prospered well in worldly things,
Ay, were on nodding terms with Czars and
Kings,

I seem to see the counter and the store,
And all the shopman's manners learnt before
You donned the regal robes of finer folk,
And in your brain the strong desire awoke
To play the master where you were the man,—
Plain Hodge, make blue the plebeian blood
that ran

To warm the grocer of those early days,
Who sanded sugar and who mixed his tea
Before he bowed in Sunday sanctity,
With that lank Scotsman who your partner was.
Ah, no, I never liked you, John, because
You were a braggart and a pharisee,
Held many slaves, yet prated "Liberty."

EMPIRE BUILDING

Your sweated people toiled to make you great,
Swept out your store and laboured long and
late.

Their pay was poor, their faces lined with care,
Of all good things you took the lion's share.
In foreign lands, half naked, they slaved on
To gather gold to heap your plate upon ;
You'd swagger past, proud of their dull amaze,
In Royal purple, eager for all praise.

Oh, long ago, when you were yet a boy,
You always took the other children's toy ;
And you were best at playing games of bluff,
And no one liked you, John ; your ways were
rough.

I well remember Kate, who lived next door,
Her pretty eyes and snowy pinafore,
Which oft you would mud-spatter and then
call :

" Oh, see the dirty girl," to one and all.
A jealous and a greedy boy you were,
And loved to make a spectacle of her,
Because she never liked you, John, since you
To her sweet garden forced your rough way
through.

EMPIRE BUILDING

She heard you beg : " Oh, Father, let *me* go ;
I'll teach her how to make the white flowers
grow."

And always since I hear the same old cry :
" There's none so good, so fine, so brave as I.
Ay, even when I roam to some far spot
'Neath Eastern skies, by world and time forgot,"
I see the dusky people creeping by,
Alarmed to hear your shout of " I, I, I."
" I'll show them how, I'll tell them what, and
why ;

I'll bid them how to live, and how to die."
And when I, yawning, seek some further shore,
Some Indian strand, I hear your voice once
more :

" I'll teach them how to work, and how to
pray."

Oh, John, you never think before your day
Rome was, Greece was—can one believe it
true ?—

Great Egypt died, and never heard of *you* !

How all the small folk hated you, big John !
As you grew fat their little pastures on ;
And yet they quailed before you, or your state,
And walked behind you—all save little Kate !

EMPIRE BUILDING

She could not tame you with her gentle ways
Yet her right anger filled you with amaze.
When she would face you, giving jeer for jeer,
You struck her down, and laughed to see her
tear.

With her great heart for pity not too strong,
Yet not too weak for anger at the wrong
You loved to plague her with, as when a child
You gave her grief if e'er you thought she
smiled.

You snatched her flag, her gun, her little ships—
The very bread that touched her parted lips !
Her pretty chainey and her shining glass,
And all that took your greedy eyes, alas !
Then with rough promise sought to still her
cry,

And named her "Vixen " to the passer-by.
Ah, with what care a seething pot you'd brew
A bitter draught none mixed so well as you ;
You'd force her take, so, weakened, you might
cry :

" She's ne'er contented, yet how good am I."

The little Church wherein she loved to tell
Her pretty beads, I do remember well,

EMPIRE BUILDING

How you would push her out, and there
would stay,
With eyes uplifted, as you seemed to pray—
Ah! when, indeed, I most mistrusted you
Was when you prayed, whose Trinity I knew
The scrubbing brush, the belly, and the purse,
All badly served. Your cleanliness a curse
Of little minds, that have no thoughts to fill
The chambers of their brain, and have no will
But service to the petty things of life,
Destroy sweet Calm with their incessant strife,
Cleaning, yet never clean, they ever seek
To whiten sepulchres. Your table rude
With all its ill-prepared and heavy food
To feed your dull yet eager appetite.
Your purse well filled can shrink or can expand
To thirty silver pieces in your hand.

Yet, John, I must admit in many ways
You have your virtues not devoid of praise.
Could I forget sweet Kate who lived next door,
With sweetest eyes and snowy pinafore.
She was of finer clay—a child of dreams
Who knew the secret songs of hills and streams.
Made from the passions of the four great seas,
Lithe as the swaying of the storm-swept trees,

EMPIRE BUILDING

Sweet as the heather-bell on moorland height,
Blue were her eyes, her hair a clouding night.
What knew you, Hodge, of such a one as this,
Whose lips were lewd and had a ploughman's
kiss ?

She'll never love you, John, howe'er you smile—
A sour grimace that hides the deeper guile.
Too often you her tender heart betrayed
For her at last to listen unafraid
Of some new plan to strike her down again,
To break her heart in plotting for your gain.
Yes, as I love her, John, I you despise
And loathe you for the sorrow in her eyes.
Ah, no, we'll never like you, Hodge, your ways
are crude,
Your smile is pharisaical, your manners rude.

LOUD SHOUT THE FLAMING TONGUES OF WAR

TA'N SIONAC AR SRAIDIB AG FAIRE GO CAOCRAC

AIR—"The West's Asleep."

LOUD shout the flaming tongues of war.
The cannon's thunder rolls afar
While Empires tremble for their fall.
Thou art alone amongst them all.
Where is the friend who for thy sake
Will on his sword thy freedom take?
The son who holds thy right alone
Above an Empire or a throne?

Ah, Grannia Wael, thy stricken head
Is bowed in sorrow o'er thy dead,
Thy dead who died for love of thee,
Not for some foreign liberty.
Shall we betray when hope is near,
Our Motherland whom we hold dear,

THE FLAMING TONGUES OF WAR

To go to fight on foreign strand,
For foreign rights and foreign land ?

The Lion's fangs have sought to kill
A Nation's soul, a Nation's will ;
From tooth and claw thy wounded breast
Has held them safe, has held them blest.
About thy head great eagles are,
They fly with scream and storm of war,
Their shadows fall, we do not know
If they be friend,—if they be foe.

For Lion's roar we have no fears,
We fought him down the restless years.
We watch the Eagles in the sky,
Lest they should land—or pass us by.
But, yet beware ! the Lion goes
To strike our friends—to charm our foes.
By hamlet small, by hill and dale
The creeping foe is on our trail ;

His face is kind, his voice is bland,
He prates of faith and fatherland ;
Shall we go forth to die and die
For Belgium's tear, and Serbia's sigh ?
Oh, Volunteers, through field and town

THE FLAMING TONGUES OF WAR

He seeks his prey, he tracks thee down
His voice is soft, his words are fair,
It is the creeping foe, Beware !

Ah, Grannia Wael, in blood and tears
We fought thy battles through the years,
That thou shouldst live we're glad to die
In prison cell or gallows high.
Oh, cursed be he ! who to our shame
Drives forth thy manhood in thy name,
O, WHILE THE LION LAPS YOUR
BLOOD
SHALL WE UNITE IN SERVITUDE.

THE HILL-SIDE MEN

O WERE my heart a little dog
I'd call it to my side
To hold it with a silken lead
And would not be denied.

For O it wandered far from me
By mountain, vale and glen,
How glad it marched the weary miles
Amongst the hill-side men !

Ah, were my heart a singing bird
I would not let it free,
It dare not dream of sunrise skies,
Or chant of liberty.

For, ah ! it sprang cloud high to sing
From mountain, vale, and fen,
When first it heard the secret drums,
The hearts of hill-side men.

THE HILL-SIDE MEN

My hopes are lost, my dreams are fled ;
How lone are vale and fen !
My heart lies cold within the grave
That holds the hill-side men.

THE STAR

[IN MEMORY OF PATRICK PEARSE]

I SAW a dreamer, I saw a poet,
On the red battle-field fell my slow tear,
“ Lover of birds and flowers, singer of gentle
songs,
Dying with men of war, what do you here ? ”
Languid his closing eyes looked to the breaking
dawn
Where the young day peeped out through
prison bars,
“ I on a high hill stood singing a dear old
song,
I fell to earth,” he sighed, “ grasping at stars.”

He laid him softly down, cold was his paling
cheek,
Silent and chill he grew as the dead are,
But from his folded hands on to the crimson
earth

THE STAR

Glowing and shimmering fell a great star.
Out of the heavens there came a hand raising
 it,
Set in the green sky for all to see,
There it shone purely bright, faithful as
 planets shine,
There it sung loud and sweet, " Come, follow
 me "

“ TELLING THE BEES ”

THIS is the son of the white morning singing,
Combing her silken hair's simmer of gold,
All of her slenderness wrapped in a gossamer
Green of the dawning sky, dear to behold.

“ When the lime is in blossom the bees are
 busy,
 Summer has come with her honey-sweet
 mouth ;
The lime is in bloom and the hive it is silent,
 Come little bees from the North and the
 South !

“ Gather your store when the red sun is
 shining,
 Gather the harvest so that you may feast,
The hive is nigh empty, the Queen she is
 weeping,
 Come little bees from the West and the
 East.”

“ TELLING THE BEES ”

I saw one go in the pale of the dawning,
In a fair May-time a-telling the bees,
Tapping the hive there she told of men dying,
Many a dear name she called to the breeze.

They are coming, the bees, for the time is in
blossom ;

They are coming, the bees, from the West,
South, and East ;

They hum “ donas Sasan,” they hum “ Sonas
Eireann,

We gather the honey, prepare for the feast.”

KITTIE'S TOYS

A CHILD'S SONG

[WRITTEN FOR KATHLEEN]

I WISH I had a soldier, a soldier, a soldier,
I wish I had a soldier to fight for love of me
Marie has a soldier, a soldier, a soldier,
Marie has a soldier, a gallant man is he.

I wish I had a bright flag, a gay flag, a dear
flag,
I would love a fair flag to fly in liberty,
Gretchen has a big flag, a brave flag, a strong
flag,
Gretchen has a fine flag that floats all high
and free.

I wish I had a small ship, a strong ship, a
good ship,
I would love a trim ship to sail upon the sea.

KITTIE'S TOYS

Johnny has a big ship, a grey ship, a grand
ship,
Johnny took my small ship with all his big
navie.

I wish I had a penny, a penny, a penny,
I wish I had a penny that all belonged to me,
I would build a fair house, a great house, a
strong house,
I would make *one* grand house for all the world
to see.

But Johnny stole my penny, my penny, my
penny,
And Johnny took my bright flag that floated
fair and free,
Then Johnny had my small ship, my trim
ship, my good ship,
And Johnny broke my soldier that fought for
liberty.

Now John would be my soldier, my soldier,
my soldier,
But John he is a greedy boy, a selfish boy is
he ;

KITTIE'S TOYS

And Johnny beats the wee ones, the small
ones, the weak ones,
He takes their playthings from them in the
name of liberty.

When Johnny gets a whacking, a whacking, a
whacking,
When Johnny gets a whacking, I think he'll
let me be,
And I shall have my penny, my penny, my
penny,
And I shall buy a bright flag to wave in
victory.

THE STORY WITHOUT END

BEFORE my time my kindred were
As felons in their land,
Because they claimed the liberty
That freemen understand.

Ere I was born in Dublin town
Men's hearts were still aflame ;
They spoke of Allen and O'Brien,
And whispered Larkin's name.

When I slept on my mother's breast,
A little babe, and frail,
Young Duffy's hearse went slowly by :
He died in Milbank Jail.

When I could read, I spelt and knew
The lives of patriot men ;
When I could write, my pencil traced—
“ A Nation Once Again.”

THE STORY WITHOUT END

I learnt of those who often knew
The baton and the cell,
Who asked for right by peaceful means—
O'Connell to Parnell.

And once when thro' the cheering streets
Some "felon" homeward came
I lit, amongst the gayer lights,
My candle's tiny flame.

When I was but a tiny child
I ran by Kickham's side ;
I heard his bitter story told
In reverence and pride.

And when with years he passed away,
When life was young and fair,
I stood upon time's crowded path,
And met O'Leary there.

I saw with pity and amaze
A craven party go,
Obedient to a Scotsman's word,
For Parnell's overthrow.

THE STORY WITHOUT END

Before Kilmainham's bloodstained walls
I stood all cold and still ;
I lived through all the awful night
That shadowed Pentonville.

If thus o'er *one* life's blotted page
Some neutral soul should bend,
He'll read to-day—as yesterday—
The story without end.

THE DEAD SOLDIER

[IN MEMORY OF THOMAS ASHE]

*Where the sword has opened the way the man
will follow*

“ LOOK ! they came, the triumphant army !
Over yon hill see their weapons peeping ! ”
Still I spoke not but my wheel sent turning,
I closed my eyes for my heart was weeping,
My heart was weeping for a dead soldier.

Who is he who looks towards me ?
“ ’Tis no man but a gay flag flying,”
Red was his mouth and his white brow
thoughtful,
Blue his eyes—how my soul is crying,
My soul is crying for a dead soldier.

THE DEAD SOLDIER

“Kneel ye down, lest your eyes should dare
them,

Kneel ye down and your beads be saying.”

“Lord, on their heads Thy wrath deliver,”
This is the prayer that my lips are praying,
My heart is praying for a dead soldier.

“Best cheer the path of the men victorious,
For he is dead and his blade lies broken,
His march is far where no aid can follow,
And for his people he left no token,
He left no token, the dead soldier.”

The way of the sword a man can follow,
See the young child with his gold hair gleaming
When falls the oak must the acorn perish?
He lifts the blade and his eyes are dreaming,
He dreams the dream of the dead soldier.

THE END

h. Sheffield,

1949.

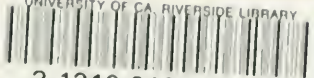


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